

July, 1936.

Life of an American

(1869--1935)

by

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Preface.

At the close of 1929 I returned from an intermittent absence of seven years to my home in Washington, D.C., flushed with the success I had met in organizing the first World Census of Agriculture for the International Institute of Agriculture at Rome and the United States Department of Agriculture, bursting with information concerning world agriculture and what I had seen and learned, full of hope and looking forward eagerly to rejoining my family and friends and official colleagues, and enjoying again their love, affection, and society, and of resuming a position in the government service suitable to my rank and experience--only to plunge into the icy depths of unexpected and undeserved disappointment. I had been away too long. The family had grown away from me, friends had forgotten me, conditions had changed completely, and my own bureau in the Department of Agriculture had come to regard me as long out of service and no provision had been made for my return. For the first time since childhood I was without employment. My age and long period of public service had unfitted me for private employment, a major depression was just getting under way, real estate had lost its selling value, and I was without income.

The first two months after my return was a period of painful disillusionment, uncertainty, and suspense--a new experience in striking contrast with all that had gone before. It was a period of sober thinking, self-appraisal, review of past life, and scanning of

possible courses of action. It had been a matter of much pride with me that for more than forty years it had never been necessary for me to seek employment or advancement--both had come unsolicited--and it was now too late to begin. I owned a town house in Washington and two small farms in Frederick County, Maryland, and believed that by good management I could make ends meet. I lacked ten years of legal retirement age from the public service, but if my long and rather conspicuous service and unusual experience had lost their value, why not retire gracefully and voluntarily from the Department that I regarded as my official home and alma matre and do some of the many things I had for years dreamed of doing, such as living at my mountain retreat in Maryland with my beloved plant friends, reading again the books I loved and exploring other books that I had been prevented from reading by press of official duties, cultivate my own soul and intellectual life, and perhaps write?

Write? Why not? I had written uncounted thousands of official letters and reports and speeches. At any rate, I could write for my own amusement and occupation. How wonderful it would be to try to remember and record the incidents and experiences of sixty years from the first awakening of consciousness as an infant through a childhood in an industrial town in northern Illinois, a boyhood and youth on farms in northeast Texas, as a country school teacher, as a shorthand reporter, as a civil service employe in the War Department in Washington D.C., stenographer to a Joint Commission of Congress to Investigate Business Methods in the Executive Departments of the Government, head of a public stenographic office in Washington, employe and official in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as a specialist in the employe of the Argentine Government, and as Director of the First World Agricultural Census for the International Institute of Agriculture at Rome, and incidental official travel in all countries of the world. Surely

that would be an interesting experience--writing the record of one's past life--interesting to me and possibly to others. Then it was I began to jot down in shorthand notes of my recollections--and this brought peace of mind and poise.

This was interrupted early in 1930 when I was reemployed for the remainder of the year as Assistant to the Director of Scientific Work in the Department of Agriculture especially to assist in organizing the First Inter American A Conference on Agriculture to be held in Washington in September of that year. This temporary prolongation of my public service ended with 1930 and I came to live at Sunny Hill Farms in Frederick County, Maryland, early in 1931. Here I resumed the writing of shorthand notes of my life experiences and observations. The "Notes" were completed in the summer of 1933 and I began the drudgery of transcribing them on a typewriter. This was interrupted in the winter of 1933-34 by almost complete failure of eyesight due to the effect of neuritis on the optic nerves. By July of 1934 I had so far recovered my eyesight as to resume my self-imposed task when I received an emergency call from the Department of Agriculture and was appointed as a "Consulting Specialist" to undertake a semi-diplomatic mission to Argentina. Unfortunately overwork and the change of climate from the midsummer heat of the United States to the midwinter cold of Argentina contributed to bring on a severe attack of neuritis that incapacitated me for several months. In the winter of 1934-35 I resumed the transcription of my notes and made good progress until a tumor developed in my throat. When this trouble was overcome by means of radium and X-ray treatment I finished the typewriting job in July of 1936. The result was nearly 6,000 pages of typewriting.

That would make four printed volumes of about 1,000 pages each-- enough to appall any self-respecting publisher or reader. Clearly

three-fourths of this material must be discarded. In the joy of recollecting and writing I was extravagant and prodigal. Now, I realize I must economize. The account was so long in quantity of material and time of writing that on going back to the beginning it seems quite new to me, as if some one else had written it. I find that in starting out I took stock of myself, my possessions, real and personal, as befitted one at the cross-roads of life, including habits, prejudices, and opinions--such as breathing, eating, drinking, sleeping, bathing, shaving, clothes, canes, knives, pens, diaries, working, smoking, reading, observing, thinking, intuition, instincts, telepathic coincidences, sixth sense, prevision, dreaming, day dreams, sleep dreams, imagination, exploring, collecting, walking, horseback riding, talking, public speaking, listening, singing, humming, whistling, music, dancing, criticising, complaining, swearing, chuckling, praying, acquiring habits, knowledge, memories, tangibles, and property, real and personal--concerning all of which I had something to say to the extent of 44 pages, all of interest to me in writing and reading, but must be stricken out if I am to sacrifice three-fourths of what I have written in order to come within the compass of a single volume. The 6,000 typewritten pages really represent a mere fraction or abstract of my memories. If these are reduced to 1,500 typewritten pages they will represent not an abstract but an outline of my sixty years of "pleasing, anxious being." However, I am somewhat comforted by the thought that the diary of Samuel Pepys fills nine printed volumes and covers only nine years of his life.

Verily, no complete biography or autobiography has ever been printed, and probably never will be, because life is a ~~sm~~ rapid succession of sensations, perceptions, and conscious thoughts that cannot be recorded by any means yet known to humanity. Even the recording ~~angel~~ angels would have to hustle.

Past Life.

~~Back to the earliest awakening to consciousness is a brief~~

Preconscious Life.

~~period~~ Between birth and the first awakening to consciousness is a brief period that is nonexistent for the individual and can only be inferred from what he has heard his parents say about it and what he has seen of other little humans in the same situation. Back of that, of course, are progenitors and ancestors which, as can be mathematically demonstrated, include all humanity up to a certain period. For example, if we start with two parents, and remember that each parent also had two parents, and so on back to the beginning, we find that if we allow a full span of life. 70 years, to each generation, which is more than the average, every human being on earth at the present time must have ~~had~~ descended directly from 1,594,884,096 ancestors in a period of only 2,240 years, which was more than the entire population of the globe at the beginning of that period; or, conversely, 1,594,884,096 human beings now living (about three-fourths of the estimated present population of the globe) can trace back to a single pair living 2,240 years ago. *P* Under the first supposition practically every human being can claim as an ancestor almost any character of which there is record from the palmy days of the Roman Empire back to and beyond the beginning of recorded history. Also, mathematically speaking, the living descendants of any such character now cover the earth. *P* It is also an accepted biological fact that all living things, including human beings, are composed of living cells, each a subdivision of another cell, derived by subdivision of a mother cell identical in substance, and that this process of cell division goes back as far as the imagination can carry it to the beginning of life on earth, a time ~~so~~ so remote that it can only be conjectured.

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Between birth and the first awakening to consciousness

of life on earth, a time so remote that it can only be conjectured. goes back as far as the imagination can carry it to the beginning cell identical in substance, and that this process of cell division a subdivision of another cell, derived by subdivision of a mother things, including human beings, are composed of living cells, each the earth. It is also an accepted biological fact that all living speaking, the living descendants of any such character now cover and beyond the beginning of recorded history. Also, mathematically there is record from the palmy days of the Roman Empire back to human being can claim as an ancestor almost any character of which 2,240 years ago. Under the first supposition practically every population of the globe) can trace back to a single pair living man beings now living (about three-fourths of the estimated present the beginning of that period; or, conversely, 1,294,884,096 years, which was more than the entire population of the globe at directly from 1,294,884,096 ancestors in a period of only 2,240 human being on earth at the present time must have descended years, to each generation, which is more than the average, every the beginning, we find that if we allow a full span of life, 70 remember that each parent also had two parents, and so on back to certain period. For example, if we start with two parents, and can be mathematically demonstrated, include all humanity up to a Back of that, of course, are progenitors and ancestors which, as and what he has seen of other little humans in the same situation. only be inferred from what he has heard his parents say about it is a brief period that is nonexistent for the individual and can

But although we owe to these cellular ancestors our life, physical characteristics, tendencies, instincts, ^{and} probably many intuitions, imaginings, and dreams, we can know but little about them other than through inference and speculation.

Ancestors.

Like most Americans I know little of my immediate ancestors. I never saw my grandfather and about all I know of him is that he was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, married, had three children of whom my father was the youngest, separated from his wife, was captain of a passenger packet on the Erie Canal, and died in Buffalo, N.Y., when I was a child. I do not even know his first name. Some years ago I obtained a copy of an "Estabrook Genealogy," which shows that the traditional three brothers came from England to Boston in 1660, that one was a preacher at Lexington, one a teacher, and one a town surveyor.

All I know of father's mother is that she was proud of the fact that she was a "Dimmick," which means nothing to me, and traced her descent to an Irish king. She came to live with my parents for awhile when I was an infant, but the house was not large enough for her and my mother and she soon went to live with friends, and when and where she died I do not know.

My mother's father, name of Brown, died when she was a child, and his first name, antecedents, life, and place of death are unknown. Mother's best recollection is, first that he was an Englishman and served as a captain in the Mexican War, secondly that he was a Virginian, and thirdly that he was from New Jersey, but she was never able to identify ^{him with} any Brown who served as an officer in the Mexican or any other war.

My mother speaks of her mother as having been born in

Alsace or Switzerland, family name Hartman, niece of a celebrated French Bishop. She ^{understood} says that the family were refugees from France during the Napoleonic wars and emigrated to Philadelphia and thence to Ohio and Illinois. She says her mother spoke French but never taught it to any of her eight children; that she was present at a reception given to General LaFayette at Philadelphia in 1824; that she was a cousin of the Captain ^{Johan} Suter on whose land gold was first discovered in California in 1849; that she was married three times, first to a man named Aiken in Ohio who died; secondly to a man named Dexter, who also died; and thirdly to a man named Brown who, it appears, was a farmer in Illinois, who died when mother was an infant. There were eight children by these three marriages, of which mother was the youngest. This grandmother died and was buried at Grand ^{d D} Decatur, Ill., when I was an infant.

This about sums up my hearsay knowledge of my grandparents and so far as my conscious life is concerned they might as well never have lived. Apparently they made very little impression upon my parents, perhaps for the reason that both ~~parents~~ left home at an early age.

Accepting mother's ideas ^{as to} the constitution of our family, it will be seen that I had one grandfather of New England Puritanical preacher stock, one grandfather of Virginia-English cavalier stock, one grandmother of English-Irish-New England stock, and one grandmother of Swiss-French stock.

was born in Hartland, Wisconsin, in 1848

My father, John Otis Estabrook, ^A was of small stature, medium size, with well-knit muscular figure, blond complexion, blue eyes, light brown hair, regular ~~features~~ clear-cut features, nervous temperament, quick tempered, alert, cheerful disposition, social by nature, slow to give offense but quick to take it, and always

ready to fight on the drop of the hat, as if he had a strain of Irish in him. From hearsay I know that on the separation of his parents when he was a child he went to live with an uncle and aunt at Oconomowoc, Wis.; that he liked to play truant with some Irish boy companions, play games and go in swimming, and that he belonged to a band of Irish neighbor boys that fought pitched battles with a band of neighbor German boys. From his association with Irish boys and their parents he could imitate the Irish brogue to perfection, and all his life he liked the Irish and heartily disliked ~~all~~ Germans. He ran away from home at the mature age of 13 and found employment as a cabin boy on a lake steamer. A year later, with a companion, he misrepresented his age and enlisted in the U.S. Navy, 1864^{or}~~18~~65, and was on the ill-fated Banks expedition up Red River. He was honorably discharged and later in life received a pension. All his life he was proud of his naval service and was intensely patriotic, being a member of the Grand Army of the Republic, at one time Commander of the Naval^a Post in Texas, and Adjutant of the G.A.R. Post in Washington, D.C. After the close of the war he went to school in Rockford, Ill., doing janitor work to pay his board. Here he met mother and married in his 18th year.

He died about 1920 in his 72d year and is burried in Mount Olivet

Cemetery

in Frederick, Md.

~~was born in Grand Detour, Ill., in 1852~~

My mother, Emma Brown, is of medium height, ~~with thick~~

~~xxxxx~~ brunette, and until middle life had a wealth of unusually

long and thick black hair. She was born in Grand^d de^{De} Tour, Ill.,

was the baby of the family, grew up with seven brothers and sisters and her widowed mother, went to school and finished the elementary

grades, worked during vacations in a factory in Rockford, Ill., where

~~she~~ met and married father at the age of 16. She has the artistic

to live on the ship of the "M", as it had a wireless

lived in his. From here I know that on the separation of his

parents when he was a child he went to live with an uncle and

name of "Mason", etc.; that he liked to play tennis with some

Irish boy companions, play tennis and go in swimming, and that

he belonged to a band of Irish nationalist boys that fought against

British rule in Ireland. From his association

with Irish boys and their parents he could learn the Irish language

to perfection, and all his life he lived the Irish and nationalist

life. He ran away from home at the early age of

15 and found employment as a cabin boy on a lake steamer. A year

later, with a companion, he attempted to go and enlisted in

the U.S. Navy, 1905-1906, and was on the U.S.S. "Albatross" expedition

around the world. He was honorably discharged and later in life received

an education. All his life he was proud of his naval service and

was intensely patriotic, being a member of the Grand Army of the

Republic, at the time Commander of the 1st Irish Legion, and

Adjutant of the U.S. 1st Irish Legion, D.C. After the close of

the war he went to school in Hartford, Ill., doing janitor work to

pay his board. Here he met mother and married in his 18th year.

He died about 1950 in his 70th year and is buried in Mount Olivet

~~in the cemetery of the Roman Catholic Church in~~

Chicago, Ill. His mother, Mrs. Brown, is of medium height, dark

Irish complexion, and until middle life had a wealth of naturally

long and wavy black hair. She was born in 1860, in Ill.,

and the baby of the family, grew up with two brothers and sisters

and her eldest brother went to school and finished the elementary

grades, worked during vacation in a factory in Hartford, Ill.,

and was married before the age of 16. She has one sister